

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY
LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, negotiations on the next round of COVID relief continued yesterday and will continue again today. Speaker PELOSI and I are making progress with the White House, but we remain far apart on a large number of issues.

As I mentioned yesterday, the fundamental disagreement between our two parties is the scope and severity of the problem. This is the greatest economic crisis America has faced in 75 years and the greatest health crisis in 100. There must be a relief package commensurate with the size of this historic challenge. A skinny package—a package that doesn't solve so many of the problems that America faces—would hurt the American people, and we cannot have it.

But our Republican friends are wedded ideologically to the idea that government shouldn't take forceful action; that we should leave the welfare of the American people to the whims of the private sector. It just doesn't work like that, especially in a time of national emergency. The private sector cannot do it.

While we have started to generate some forward momentum, we need our partners in the White House to go much further on a number of issues, let alone the Republican Senate, where 20 or so Republicans, by the majority leader's admission, don't want to do anything.

For example, the administration has finally come around to the view that we should extend the moratorium on evictions, but they continue to refuse to provide actual assistance to the renters themselves. What good does that do? We can prevent Americans from being kicked out of their apartments for another few months, but if they can't pay the rent, they will be right back at square one when the moratorium expires, with even more unpaid bills piled up. Extending the moratorium on evictions solves only one-half of the problem.

Republicans continue to stonewall support for State, local, and Tribal governments, which have already shed more than a million public service jobs this year and will continue to lay off teachers, firefighters, and more if Congress does nothing.

In the early days of the crisis, State and local governments fought this disease basically on their own. The Trump administration couldn't be bothered to coordinate a national response or supply them with the necessary resources. Now Leader MCCONNELL and others on the Republican side say our States

should just go bankrupt. They put zero into their proposal for State and local and would like Republican Senators to go home and tell their Governors, tell their mayors, and tell their county executives: We want zero for you. That is what our leader is for. Well, it is not acceptable.

On unemployment insurance, a few Senate Republicans have belatedly accepted the view we should extend the enhanced benefit of \$600 for an extended period of time, as Democrats have proposed and voted for in the House. Of course, many Senate Republicans—most Senate Republicans—still object to that, but at least a few have come around. At the moment, however, the White House is not there, and we are not going to strike a deal unless we extend the unemployment benefits, which have kept nearly 12 million Americans out of poverty.

The same goes for healthcare, testing, and tracing. How is it that everyone in the White House can get tested, everyone in the NFL can get tested, but average Americans still cannot access tests easily or get results back fast enough? More than 7 months into the crisis, this administration does not have a plan or adequate capacity for testing and contact tracing. It is a shocking failure on the part of the Trump administration and the Republican Senators.

So Democrats are insisting that we provide enough resources to finally slow the spread and defeat this disease—the single most important thing to our recovery. The American people know that the Trump administration and their Republican adherents in the Senate are to blame for this huge failure in testing and tracing. They demand we act and act fully now, not with some half-baked, poorly funded plan that won't do the job, which is where the administration seems to be at right now.

Democrats are insisting that every American should be able to vote this November safely and confidently in person or by mail. COVID has affected how we will vote. Many more will vote by mail. There will be a need for polling places—maybe more of them—and a need to space people out as they vote. We are not going to stop fighting until State election systems and the post office, which is part of getting the mail there on time, get the resources they need.

Elections are a wellspring of our democracy, and the only answer as to why neither the Republicans in the Senate nor the White House wants to do anything about it is they fear a free and fair election. That is inimicable to the core of this Republic.

We are going to keep fighting. There have been alarming reports about recent failures at the post office, about residents in Michigan and Pennsylvania not getting their medicines or their paychecks for 3 weeks or more. The Postal Service is vital—and not just for elections but every single day.

The new Postmaster, Mr. DeJoy, a big donor to President Trump—which many believe is his main qualification for being chosen—has enacted new guidelines in the post office that experts say will cause severe delays in mail delivery. Then he refused for weeks to even hold a phone call with Democrats, including myself, about this issue. I called three times. Mr. DeJoy evidently didn't have the time to call back when I was so concerned about mail delivery in New York and the rest of the country. So we have insisted to Mr. Mnuchin and Mr. Meadows on meeting with Mr. DeJoy, which will take place later today.

We need to resolve the problems at the post office—this lack of funding and the new regulations that get in the way of the timely delivery of the mail. We must resolve those issues in a way that allows mail to be delivered on time for the election and for the necessities that people need.

Each and every one of these issues is critical, and there are many more. We need answers and movement on all of them, not just on one or two, but some of our Republican friends seem content to pass a bill—any bill—so they can check the box and go home. We cannot do that. We cannot agree to an inadequate bill and then go home while the virus continues to spread, the economy continues to deteriorate, and the country gets worse. So we are going to keep slogging through, step by step, inch by inch, until we achieve the caliber, the extent, the depth and breadth of the legislation that the American people need, deserve, and want.

In stark contrast, the Republican leader has decided that he would rather lob partisan pot shots from the Senate floor each morning rather than join in productive negotiations. It is difficult to listen to the Republican leader spin such a malicious fiction about why Congress has yet to pass another round of relief when he can't even sit in the room with us and negotiate, when he can't even create a modicum of unity in his disturbingly divided caucus.

For 3 months, Leader MCCONNELL and Senate Republicans put the Senate on pause when it came to the coronavirus. As COVID threats spread throughout the South and West, as States hit daily records for new cases and hospitalizations, as 50 million Americans filed for unemployment, the Senate Republican majority merely hummed along as if it were living in a different universe.

Leader MCCONNELL scheduled confirmation votes on rightwing judges. The chairman of Judiciary and Homeland Security held hearings on the President's wild conspiracy theories about the 2016 election and conducted desperate fishing expeditions, hoping to dig up dirt on the family of the President's political rivals. When the Republican majority did put legislation on the floor, it wasn't even remotely related to COVID.

All through that time, Democrats came to the floor to practically beg our